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### Valuable insights into the thought of D. F. Strauss

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**Valuable insights into the thought of D. F. Strauss**

*The 'Nocturnal Side of Science' in David Friedrich Strauss's Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2015: pp. x + 219, ISBN 987-1-62837-108-3, \$29.95) is a cumbersome title, and one which might suggest a somewhat rarefied subject-matter. This book is in fact an engaging read: based on the PhD thesis of its author, Thomas Fabisiak, it offers some fascinating insights into the empirical studies which formed the background to D. F. Strauss's thought.

The book begins with a scrutiny of the 'science of the nocturnal side of nature', a term used by Strauss in relation to his early writings on the investigation of contemporary claims of demon-possession, ghost-seeing, and other 'irrational' phenomena. Fabisiak then examines the impact of these studies on various aspects of Strauss's *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* – in particular his treatment of miracles, his understanding of myth, and his location of the foundation of Christianity in the disciples' visions of a resurrected Jesus. Fabisiak sets Strauss in his context philosophically and theologically as well as scientifically, discussing the ways in which his work was informed by, and responded to, the writings of authors such as Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, de Wette and others.

Inevitably, a project of this kind leaves some avenues of investigation underexplored. The extent to which Romantic writers like Novalis shaped the world-view which could give rise to an expression like the 'nocturnal side of science' is touched on, but not elaborated. The differences between Strauss's positions in his 1835 *Life of Jesus* and in his *New Life of Jesus* of 1864 are attributed to 'shifts in Strauss's social and political self-conception' (p. 192): it would have been interesting to have heard more of Fabisiak's views regarding what might have motivated such

shifts. But Fabisiak has produced a stimulating work which will be of great interest to those engaging with nineteenth century German theology and culture.

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